

THE CONVERTED SOLDIER BECOME A ZEALOUS MISSIONARY.

William Magrath was a native of Ireland, the son of Roman Catholic parents. He was destined by his parents to enter holy orders in that Church, therefore he received a classical education. Their pious intentions, however, were frustrated by his entering the army as a private soldier. He enlisted in the year 1826 for his Majesty's Buffs, which was on foreign service in the East Indies. In the year 1827 he joined his regiment, and was appointed an assistant schoolmaster in the regimental school. On being placed in this situation he resolved on studying the Scriptures, and assiduously read the New Testament in Greek and English, carefully comparing the one with the other, which soon became the effectual means, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, of his conversion from sin to holiness, from error to truth. His mind being enlightened by the rays of divine truth, he hesitated not to avow the change which had taken place in his sentiments; he therefore joined the Christian society formed in that corps, and in a short time became an exemplary Christian, zealous for the promotion of God's glory, and the welfare of immortal souls.

It appears that, being in the army, he considered that his usefulness was greatly limited; he, therefore, resolved on leaving it, which he did in 1831, by paying

the stipulated sum of £20. As soon as he was liberated from the trammels of a military life some pious gentlemen residing in Calcutta effected his entering the mission of the Church of England, and the duty connected with that situation he performed laboriously, attentively, and assiduously, until having met with the biography of Xavier, he caught the flame that enkindled the breast of his ancient predecessor, and, after mature deliberation, he resolved on following his example, by devoting himself to itinerant preaching among the heathen. He immediately sold, by public auction, all his "earthly goods," and cheerfully remitted the amount to the Bible Society—a society which he admired, while he frequently prayed for its success. He often said that it was the brightest diadem in Britain's crown.

Now follow him traversing the burning sands of Hindostan, without money, without home, without friends, without human protection, going through the interior of the country (simply relying on Providence), proclaiming the everlasting gospel to perishing, deluded heathens, and behold, the same Lord that caused ravens to feed Elijah opened the hearts of his hearers to embrace him, and they gladly supplied his wants.

In the year 1832, in travelling through the country, he was providentially brought to Ghazeepoor, where a regiment was stationed. He remained a fortnight with me, and during his stay he preached every night to the society; his discourses were energetic, sublime, and evangelical; they comforted the saint and alarmed the sinner.

It was at this period that I formed the most intimate friendship with him, and was hourly an eye-witness of the holiness of his life, for he walked worthy of the vocation wherewith he was called, adoring the gospel

and religion of Christ, for the power of divine grace was evidently manifested and illustriously displayed in the whole of his walk and conversation.

His meekness of spirit and humility of life were exceedingly great. He endeavored to copy the example of the blessed Jesus, who said: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." At all times he possessed a deep sense of his guilt, and always called himself an unprofitable servant, and the chief of sinners.

His faith, hope, and love, were of a purely Scriptural kind. Sweet devotion was his element, ardent were the breathings of his soul after a union with Christ; his constant desire was to serve God better, and love Jesus more. Reading and studying the Scriptures were his delight; he appreciated them above fine gold, yea, he esteemed them more than his necessary food. It was his continual aim to pay a uniform and unfeigned obedience to all the commands of God, his Heavenly Father; but, above all, his *zeal* for immortal souls was unspeakably great; it was the whole bent of his mind to reclaim an apostate world; day and night he rested not to proclaim the glad tidings of redeeming love to perishing sinners.

He was one of the brightest ornaments of religion that I ever saw, and the many virtues which adorned his character, and which, to every one's eyes but his own, shone like so many sparkling gems, were of a purely Christian kind; his religion was that of the New Testament, "Being justified by faith, he found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But his character the reader will deduce with more precision and satisfaction to himself from the following extracts from his letters, which I submit in their origi-

nal form, than from any summary given of it by the writer of this narrative:

PATNA, April 3, 1832.

MY DEAREST BROTHER:

How can I fully show my gratitude for your very great kindness to me, since I have none of this world's goods; I can only pray for you, and humble myself before you; indeed this is the garment (humility) which best becometh such a person as I seem to be. I am an incumbrance wherever I go, having nothing to give in return, either temporally or spiritually. My ignorance, pride, and sloth unfit me for the work, the *name* of which I bear. Oh! it is but the name! I am now nearly three days in this great city, and I have scarcely attempted to do anything, and if I do attempt, I have neither love, knowledge of the language, nor faith to make the attempt prosperous; however, though thus tried, I do not despair in Christ, and oh that I could despair more and more of my own powers and person. My dear William, while my heart glows with love to you, I beseech you to be instant in prayer for the work of Christ in my hands. Crave the prayers of all for me—those of Mrs. B. I value. I cannot express the feelings of a grateful heart toward such a dear woman; may she shine more and more unto the perfect day, looking unto Jesus who has treasure laid up in heaven for "the meek." Believe me, my dearest brother, that I have the welfare of yourself and your family much at my heart; yes, I can say this in truth, therefore hear what your poor friend may urge, by means of quickening you in your way to Zion. The way, you know, is narrow, the gate is strait, many shall seek to enter in

and shall not be able.* Oh, then, how doth it not behoove us to hear the voice of God, while he directs us in this way: "Hear and your soul shall live." Hear then the terms, as it were, by which he will give us strength to enter in at the *strait gate*: Deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me. These are words easy to be understood, as will be seen in the last day. Fight the good fight, lay hold on eternal life, flee youthful lusts, seek your soul's salvation alone by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, fear not what man can do unto you, then your light will so shine as to glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Be zealous, instruct the ignorant, help the weak, reprove the sinful, and endeavor to point out to all, by a holy life, the way to everlasting happiness. Be not ashamed of Christ, and he will not be ashamed of you. Oh! take heed that you deny him not, lest that after all he should deny you before his Father and the holy angels, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints. Lay not up treasure on earth. Glorify God with your substance, and neither you nor yours shall ever want for any good thing. Finally, my dear brother, I beseech you to seek by faith to love God and your neighbor more. I am ignorant, else I should write better, but may God bless what has been said to our souls.

* The passage here alluded to (Luke xiii, 24), is often misunderstood, simply by separating the 24th verse from the 25th. By reading them continuously the meaning is obvious, thus: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able, when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are." In this way seeking to enter in and not being able is what cannot take place in the present life, but is plainly confined to the state of men after death, when the invitations of mercy are forever withdrawn, or when the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door (compare Matt. xxv, 11).

Give my warmest respects to the Christian Society. I entreat them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to seek wisdom at the Lord's mouth, yea, that they seek everything needful from and through Christ the "*Head of the Church.*"

Yours, affectionately,

W. MAGRATH.

PATNA, May 16, 1832.

MY DEARLY BELOVED BROTHER:

I have received your most kind and very welcome letter, but it found me in a state of soul truly dejected; but in vain do I seek comfort in creatures. God in Christ is the only source of happiness to a soul that knows its fallen state, and I think that in some small measure I know and feel that I am a fallen creature, under the curse of that law which I have broken, that is if I stand in myself. At times I have a hope that I have taken refuge in the blood of Christ; but again, I have so many doubts of my acceptance with a pure and just God, that my soul is almost overwhelmed, and everything has lost its comfort to me. I can trace the cause to my unfaithfulness, unwatchfulness, and extreme remissness in prayer. I desire your effectual petitions on my behalf. I mention these things so that you all may be excited to pray for me.

With my heart full of love to the brethren, with prayer for my dear brother's temporal and eternal welfare, I remain yours ever,

W. MAGRATH.

RAJHMAHL, October 18, 1832.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER:

Your kind letter found me at this place, which I now sit down to answer, it being scarcely one hour since I landed here. The song that glows from your tongue,

my dear friend, is that which shall fill all eternity. The love of God, oh, the love of God, it passeth all understanding. Love to venomous reptiles of the earth. Love in giving us our being, and its heights and depths are in himself. Glory, and power, and blessing, O Lord God Almighty, be unto thee, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. How can I leave off speaking of such love; but I must, and reserve much of it for that day when I shall see thee as thou art, O Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, with us for ever. Blessed be Jesus, above all and in all.

Some way from this I entered the hills yesterday, and declared to those people the love of God as well as I could. • Pray, my dear brother, that God may bless the preaching of his word to these poor creatures. Remember me to all the society. Now I must say farewell, remaining thine in love, and in the hope of glory,

W MAGRATH.

This was the last letter that I received from this valuable friend and Christian.

The following letter, bearing tidings of his death, was written by the Rev. Mr. Leslie, missionary at Monghyr, East Indies :

MONGHYR, April 14, 1833.

MY DEAR SIR:

I have just this moment received your letter of the 8th instant. It is true that poor Magrath is gone. He left this in opposition to the persuasion of friends about the beginning of last October. The season was not suited to his visiting the hills. I urged and entreated him to take up his residence at Bhaugulpore, where there was a small congregation of English ready to listen to him, thousands of Hindoos and Mussulmans, and at least a thousand of hill people, to all of whom

he would, in all probability, have been very useful. But no, he was determined to go at once to the hills ; and he went. Shortly after his arrival at the base of the hills he was seized with fever ; he then began to retreat, as is supposed, to Monghyr, but unable to get along, he stopped at a village about two miles on this side of Sukree Gully, where he breathed his last. Some European gentlemen, passing down the river just after he died, stopped and kindly took him up and buried him. When I heard of his death I went out in search of his grave, and also to inquire among the natives the particulars of the melancholy event ; but all I could get from them was that he was seven days ill in the village, and the last two senseless. Thus ended the life of this extraordinary man and eminent Christian. I have no doubt that he is now in glory.

Yours, sincerely,

A. LESLIE.

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